

It All Depends . . .

An Intimate Message from Washington

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WASHINGTON

Who's winning the cold war?

It depends on whom you are talking to. It depends on what you mean by the cold war. It depends.

Some say the Russians are winning the cold war—hands down. Some say the West has Moscow on the run. Some say the Republicans have brought about an improved world outlook by their astute handling of foreign affairs. Others say that it is the Republicans whose fumbling and braggadocio in foreign policy have brought us to the brink of war again.

Ask the question and you get a dozen different answers.

Secretary Dulles was asked that question the other day, and he gave a very simple answer. He thinks the West (and by coincidence the Eisenhower administration) is winning the cold war on the following grounds: Winning the cold war means getting farther away from a hot war; it means lessening the danger of war; it means the emergence of more normal international conditions.

On that definition Mr. Dulles is convinced the West is winning the cold war. War has been ended in Korea; the fighting in Indochina has ceased; the threat of war in the Formosan Strait has diminished. The Soviets are talking and acting more like gentlemen. They have repudiated Stalinism which preached the inevitability of a capitalist-Communist war. They have lowered the Iron Curtain and now allow some East-West exchange of personnel.

They have espoused Titoism, that was anathema under Stalin, and which could pry the satellites away from Moscow. They are less intransigent on atomic control matters. They are preaching peace from Burma to Britain. In sum, the Soviets show signs of having turned over a new leaf—if not in aims at least in methods.

Mr. Dulles argues that it is contradictory (as the American Society of Newspaper Editors recently did) to vote that the United States is losing the cold war but simultaneously vote that there is less danger of war than before. If there is less threat of war today than one, two, three years ago, he claims, then the cold war is being won.

But the argument that the West (and coincidentally the Eisenhower administration) is losing the cold war goes this way: The prospect of war is actually

increasing rather than decreasing. The Middle East is more explosive now than at any time since the truce. The Arab world is on the move, aided and abetted by Moscow. The Soviets are narrowing (if they have not overcome) America's lead in atomic weapons and guided missiles. They actually boast that they will have a missile with an H-bomb warhead before long.

All this does not add up to a more peaceful world, but a more threatening world, a more dangerous world—a world where the United States is going to wind up with a second-best air force and inadequate defenses. America's allies are playing with neutralism, are beguiled with Soviet offers. The danger is that what looks like winning the cold war is actually the preparation for losing it.

From the above it seems apparent that each side in this debate can present a very effective and persuasive argument to support its claim. Also from the above it would likewise seem apparent that whether the West is winning or losing the cold war, the fight is far from finished and this is no time to gloat over successes or succumb to defeatism. This is no time to let down the guard or take to the hills. Rather it is a time to welcome all signs of Soviet moderation and cooperation, but simultaneously strengthen America's defenses at home and its alliances abroad.

Maybe the West has Moscow on the ropes. Maybe the U.S.S.R. is steaming up for an internal explosion. Maybe the Kremlin has renounced force for good. Maybe. But again—maybe not. Actually it is because no one here really knows for sure just what the East-West score is—just how thoroughly the Soviets have reversed themselves—that there is this great debate.

Central Intelligence boss Allen Dulles is collecting all the information he can clandestinely on this moot question. His brother, John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State, is collecting all he can from diplomatic channels on what the Soviets are up to. They pool their information. Some items wash others out. Some reports flatly contradict other supposedly reliable reports. But enough pooled information appears to be corroborative to bear out John Foster's contention that the cold war is receding. At least the administration is ready to go out on a limb and claim that is the case.

But winning the cold war is not the same as having won it. We will be in serious trouble if we ever think it is.